

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01
INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02
SS-15 USIA-06 FEAE-00 EB-08 COME-00 ERDA-05 OES-06
OMB-01 TRSE-00 AID-05 ACDA-07 IO-13 AGRE-00 /113 W
-----271803Z 013172 /45

R 271317Z APR 77
FM AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7848
INFO AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI
USINT BAGHDAD
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY DOHA
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY MANAMA
AMEMBASSY MUSCAT
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY SANA
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 KUWAIT 2271

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, IZ, KU
SUBJECT: IRAQI-KUWAITI TALKS APRIL 23-25

REF: KUWAIT 2152 (NOTAL).

1. SUMMARY: A LARGE IRAQI DELEGATION WITH SEVERAL MINISTERS SPENT TWO DAYS IN KUWAIT AS THE FIRST STOP ON A TOUR OF GULF AND ARABIAN PENINSULA COUNTRIES, AN APPARENT ATTEMPT TO IMPROVE BILATERAL RELATIONS WITH STATES OF THE REGION. WHILE SOME REPORTS SUGGEST THAT THE VISIT LAID THE GROUNDWORK FOR BETTER RELATIONS BETWEEN IRAQ AND KUWAIT, IT IS CLEAR THAT THERE WAS NO SUBSTANTIVE PROGRESS ON ANY OF THE ISSUES INCLUDING BORDER PROBLEMS, OF INTEREST TO THE KUWAITIS. IT APPEARS
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THAT THE KUWAITIS WERE UNWILLING TO GRANT ANY IRAQI REQUESTS IN THE ABSENCE OF REAL PROGRESS TOWARD A SOLUTION OF BORDER PROBLEMS, WHICH THE IRAQIS WERE UNWILLING TO DISCUSS. IN THE END, HOWEVER, IRAQ REPORTEDLY PROMISED TO SEND A TEAM TO DISCUSS BORDER ISSUES (OR ELSE TO RECEIVE A KUWAITI EMISSARY), AND THE KUWAITIS SAID FAREWELL TO THE IRAQI DELEGATION WITH A COMMUNIQUE WHICH, THOUGH "BROTHERLY,"

CONTINUES TO EMPHASIZE OUTSTANDING ISSUES AND OBSTACLES.
END SUMMARY.

2. IRAQI DELEGATION LED BY INTMIN IZZAT IBRAHIM AL-DURI SPENT APRIL 23 - 25 IN KUWAIT AND REPORTEDLY ENGAGED IN WIDE RANGE OF TALKS ON BILATERAL AND REGIONAL MATTERS. ALSO ON THE DELEGATION WERE MINISTER OF STATE ADNAN KHAYRALLAH; MINISTER OF FOREIGN TRADE HASSAN ALI AL-AMIRI; FOREIGN MINISTER SA'DUN HAMMADI; MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE LATIF NASAIF JASSEM; UNDERSECRETARY OF MFA ABDUL HUSAIN AL-JAMALI; AND, REPORTEDLY, SOME SEVENTY OTHER OFFICIALS AND RETAINERS. KUWAIT FIELDED A MINISTERIAL COUNTERPART FOR EACH OF THE VISITORS MENTIONED ABOVE, WITH MINISTER FOR CABINET AFFAIRS ABDUL AZIZ HUSAIN PLAYING OPPOSITE KHAYRALLAH AND PUBLIC WORKS MINISTER AL-NISF FACING JASSEM. (KUWAITI DEFMIN/INTMIN SA'AD ALSO REPORTEDLY HELD PRIVATE TALKS WITH KHAYRALLAH, AND AL-DURI HAD A PRIVATE CHAT WITH THE KUWAITI CROWN PRINCE.) THE IRAQI VISIT OCCURRED DURING THE SAME DAYS AS THE STATE VISIT OF VENEZUELAN PRESIDENT PEREZ, AND IT SHARED THE LIMELIGHT AND SCARCE KUWAITI PERSONNEL RESOURCES WITH IT. IT APPEARED, HOWEVER, THAT THE IRAQI VISIT HELD GREATER INTEREST FOR KUWAITI OFFICIALS -- FONMIN SABAH AL-AHMED REPORTEDLY HAD PLANNED TO BE VISITING IN THE FAR EAST THIS WEEK, BUT WE WERE TOLD THAT HE PUT OFF HIS TRIP TO MEET THE IRAQIS, AND DEFMIN/INTMIN SA-AD RETURNED FROM SAUDI ARABIAN VISIT IN TIME TO HEAD THE KUWAITI SIDE.

3. DURING THE IRAQI VISIT, UNNAMED IRAQIS OCCASIONALLY COMMENTED TO THE PRESS THAT THE DELEGATION'S CURRENT TOUR RE-CONFIDENTIAL

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PRESENTS A NEW ERA OR "POLITICAL OPENING" FOR IRAQI FOREIGN RELATIONS, AND AL-DURI'S ARRIVAL STATEMENT CLAIMED THAT THE VISIT TO KUWAIT WAS PART OF A "GENERAL ARAB MOVE" TO CONSULT ONE ANOTHER ON VITAL QUESTIONS. INDEED, IT APPEARED AS IF A NUMBER OF ISSUES WERE PUT ON THE TABLE BY EACH SIDE, BUT IT IS TOO EARLY TO TELL YET HOW EACH WAS TREATED. THERE IS PRESS REPORTING TO THE EFFECT THAT THE FOLLOWING SUBJECTS WERE DISCUSSED: NAVIGATION IN THE GULF; BORDER BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES (WHICH SOME PRESS REPORTS INDICATE THE IRAQIS DID NOT HAVE "AUTHORITY" TO DISCUSS); OIL EXPLORATION IN BORDER REGIONS; IRAQI EXPORTS TO KUWAIT; AN IRAQI REQUEST FOR USE OF GOK FACILITIES TO INCREASE THE FLOW OF IRAQI TRADE THROUGH KUWAITI PORTS; GULF SECURITY COORDINATION; AND COMMUNICATIONS BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES (WHICH MAY HAVE INVOLVED THE CURRENT GOK BAN ON LAND TRAVEL BY KUWAITIS INTO IRAQ).

4. THERE WERE SOME PRESS REPORTS RE BILATERAL TALKS ON BOTH TRADE AND AGRICULTURE. COMMERCE MINISTER NAFISI (KUWAIT) AND

TRADE MINISTER ALI (IRAQ) REPORTEDLY AGREED TO "REVIVE" A 1964 AGREEMENT ON TRADE AND TO FORM BILATERAL COMMITTEES TO "SPEED UP" CONSIDERATION OF ISSUES IN THE FOLLOWING AREAS: TRANSIT, CUSTOMS AND COMMERCIAL AFFAIRS; LABOR AND EMPLOYMENT; COORDINATION OF INDUSTRIAL AND PETROLEUM PROJECTS, INVESTMENTS AND PAYMENTS, AND TOURISM. IN THE FIELD OF AGRICULTURE, IRAQI MINISTER JASSEM ALLEGEDLY UNDERTOOK TO SEND TO KUWAIT TECHNICAL EXPERTS, EQUIPMENT AND AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS, IF REQUESTED.

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5. IN CONVERSATION WITH DCM APRIL 26, MFA POL DEPT.
INTER-NATIONAL AFFAIRS SECTION CHIEF KHALID BABBAIN SAID THAT GOK CONSIDERS VISIT OF DELEGATION HEADED BY INTMIN AL-DURI, WHOM BABBAIN CHARACTERIZED AS IMPORTANT FIGURE IN GOI (POSSIBLY NUMBER THREE), TO HAVE BEEN SUCCESSFUL. MERE FACT THAT IRAQIS ARE PREPARED TO SIT AND TALK WITH KUWAITIS IS PROMISING DEVELOPMENT, HE SAID, AND GOK HOPES THIS "FLEXIBILITY" WILL GROW INTO FLEXIBILITY ON SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES. DCM SAID WE UNDERSTOOD IRAQIS HAD BEEN UNPREPARED TO DISCUSS THE BORDER PROBLEM, INCLUDING WARBA AND BUBAYAN. BABBAIN

NEITHER CONFIRMED NOR DENIED THIS, SAYING ONLY THAT, WHEN ONE HAS BEEN RIGID FOR A VERY LONG TIME, ONE CANNOT BE EXPECTED TO BECOME TOTALLY FLEXIBLE OVERNIGHT. HE ANALYZED IRAQI OBJECTIVES IN TERMS OF PROBABLE GOI SENSE OF ISOLATION
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IN ARAB WORLD, AND ACCORDINGLY A GOI DESIRE TO SHOW THAT IT WANTS TO PLAY A COOPERATIVE ROLE IN THE AREA. BABTAIN DID NOT, IN RESPONSE TO QUERY, CITE ANY EXAMPLE OF SUBSTANTIVE FLEXIBILITY REVEALED BY THE IRAQI DELEGATION. REGARDING THE THEORY THAT THE REGIME IN BAGHDAD MIGHT FEEL ITSELF UNDER MORE DOMESTIC PRESSURE THAN FORMERLY, BABTAIN AGREED, SAYING GOK HAD NO FIRM FACTS, BUT THAT, WITH THE IRAQI CABINET SHAKEUP OVER THE NAJAF AND KARBALA AGITATION, AND WITH THE KURDISH PROBLEM ACTIVE AGAIN, THERE SURELY MUST BE DEEPER PROBLEMS FOR THE SADDAM REGIME TO FACE NOW. BABTAIN SUGGESTED THIS ALSO FORMED PART OF THE RATIONALE FOR AL-DURI'S TRIP DOWN THE GULF, BUT HE DID NOT SPELL OUT THIS NOTION.

6. BRIEF COMMUNIQUE ISSUED BY GOK SPOKESMAN MINISTER HUSSEIN ON IRAQIS' DEPARTURE (FBIS, APRIL 25) IS NOTABLY LACKING IN MENTION OF THE USUAL "IDENTITY OF VIEWS." INSTEAD IT SPEAKS OF "KUWAITI... INTEREST IN RESOLVING OUTSTANDING ISSUES..." AND OF THE TWO SIDES HAVING AGREED "TO CONTINUE MEETINGS... OUT OF A DESIRE TO REMOVE ALL OBSTACLES..."

7. EMBASSY SOURCES CONFIRM PRESS REPORTS THAT THE IRAQIS CAME UNPREPARED AND UNWILLING TO TALK ABOUT THE BORDER PROBLEM, WHICH DID NOT SURPRISE BUT DID DISAPPOINT THE EVER-HOPEFUL KUWAITIS. SOURCES SAY THIS CAUSED THE GOK TO HOLD UP ACTION ON SEVERAL REQUESTS FOR KUWAITI COOPERATION ON ITEMS OF IRAQI INTEREST (INCREASED PORT ACCESS, INCREASED ACCESS TO KUWAITI SATELLITE COMMUNICATIONS FACILITIES, AND INCREASED KUWAITI TOURISM IN SOUTHERN IRAQ). THE KUWAITI ATTITUDE SEEMS TO HAVE BEEN SOMEWHAT STIFFER THAN IN THE PAST, THOUGH WE CANNOT CITE ANY SINGLE REASON FOR THIS. AT ANY RATE, THE KUWAITI STIFFENING SEEMS TO HAVE WON A SMALL CONCESSION; AFTER THE IRAQI DELEGATION LEFT, MINISTER HUSSEIN REPORTEDLY ANNOUNCED THAT IRAQ WOULD SEND A DELEGATION TO KUWAIT "SHORTLY" TO DISCUSS RESOLUTION OF BORDER MATTERS. AL-DURI'S FAREWELL STATEMENT ALSO EMPHASIZED THAT "SIDE
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PROBLEMS" WILL BE SOLVED BY FUTURE BILATERAL MEETINGS, AND MINISTER HUSSEIN IS QUOTED BY ONE REPORTER AS SAYING THAT

IRAQ "REALIZES" THAT THE BORDER PROBLEM IS HINDERING THE DEVELOPMENT OF BETTER RELATIONS.

8. OMANI CHARGE, WHO MET WITH KUWAITI FONMIN SABAH AL-AHMAD IMMEDIATELY AFTER DEPARTURE OF THE IRAQI MISSION, TOLD AMBASSADOR THAT FONMIN DID NOT DESCRIBE VISIT AS SUCCESSFUL. CONTRARY TO HUSSEIN'S STATEMENT ABOVE, FONMIN, WHO CONFIRMED IRAQIS SAID THEY WERE NOT IN POSITION TO DEAL WITH BORDER QUESTIONS, REPORTED IRAQI SUGGESTIONS THAT GOK SEND EMISSARY TO BAGHDAD TO DISCUSS BORDERS. SABAH AL-AHMAD RECEIVED NO RESPONSE TO HIS REQUEST THAT IRAQ REMOVE "GUNS" (AND PRESUMABLY TROOPS) LOCATED ON KUWAIT'S WARBAH ISLAND ACROSS FROM IRAQI PORT OF UMM QASR. (APPARENTLY, GOK HAD ALLOWED STATIONING OF IRAQI TROOPS THERE DURING PERIOD WHEN RELATIONS BETWEEN IRAQ AND IRAQ WERE TENSE.) ON GULF POLITICAL AFFAIRS, SABAH AL-AHMAD TOLD OMANI IRAQIS ASKED GOK TO TRY TO GET OMAN TO "BACK OFF" ON ITS EFFORTS TO DEVELOP COOPERATION ON GULF SECURITY, A REQUEST THAT KUWAITIS WILL NOT HONOR. ACCORDING TO OMANI CHARGE'S REPORT, KUWAITIS WERE TOLD BY IRAQIS THAT SADDAM HUSSEIN WAS AILING (DISC PROBLEM) AND WAS BEING ENCOURAGED TO HAVE TREATMENT OR CONVALESCENCE FOR AT LEAST A MONTH.

9. KUWAIT EDITORIAL REACTION TO THE IRAQI VISIT IS GENERALLY SKEPTICAL, QUESTIONING FUTURE IRAQI INTENTIONS, NOTING THAT ONLY THE PASSAGE OF TIME WILL REVEAL SUCH INTENTIONS, AND REGISTERING DISAPPOINTMENT THAT NO REAL PROGRESS WAS MADE ON BORDER ISSUES DURING THE VISIT. ONE EDITOR OPINED THAT THE VISIT WAS A SUCCESS FOR BOTH GOVERNMENTS, IN THAT THE DOOR TO SUBSTANTIVE TALKS ON THE BORDER WAS OPENED AND THAT "IRAQ CAN COUNT A SMALL SUCCESS ON ITS FIRST STOP IN THE GULF". FONMIN, IN PRESS CONFERENCE APRIL 26 SAID "ENCOURAGING DIALOGUE" EMERGED FROM IRAQI VISIT. HE TOLD PRESS HE THOUGH THIS WAS BEGINNING OF A "NEW STAGE" OF DISCUSSIONS WITH CONFIDENTIAL

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IRAQ.

10. COMMENT. RATHER THAN TERMING THE IRAQI STOP IN KUWAIT A POSITIVE SUCCESS FOR IRAQ, WE INCLINE TO THE OPINION THAT IT WAS SUCCESSFUL ONLY IN THE NARROW SENSE THAT THERE WERE NO UGLY SCENES OR FURTHER IRRITATION OF RELATIONS. THIS SHOULD ALLOW THE TRAVELING IRAQI LEADERS TO ASSERT THAT THEY "PASSED GO" IN KUWAIT, THEIR MOST NERVOUS AND SKEPTICAL NEIGHBOR. THEY CAN NOW MAKE THE ARGUMENT ELSEWHERE THAT THEY SHOULD BE ALLOWED TO CONTINUE THEIR "POLITICAL OPENING" IN THE REGION TO SEE WHERE IT LEADS. AS FOR KUWAIT, HOWEVER, DESPITE GOK EFFORT PUBLICLY TO GIVE IRAQIS BENEFIT OF DOUBT, THE SITUATION WITH IRAQ REMAINS PRETTY MUCH AS IT WAS UNEASY AND UNCERTAIN AS TO THE FUTURE.

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Message Attributes

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